

Prime Time



By And For Older Women



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Prime Time

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HOPING TO MEET YOU

At one time or another, you have probably seen that grotesque artifact entitled "A New Yorker's View of the United States"--a map on which New York City and New York State are enlarged to take up more than half the country while all the other states are squeezed together into the remaining territory. What is implied, of course, is that New Yorkers are inordinately provincial. Maybe they are, but personally, as an inhabitant of densely populated Manhattan Island, I visualize the "great open spaces" of the West as stretching out thrillingly and endlessly, while I remain confined to this tiny asphalt jungle. That's why it's so exciting for me to announce that Bea Hosford and I are planning a trip West in February.

Starting about the middle of the month from Davenport, Iowa, where Bea lives, we will be driving south through New Mexico, to Vail, Arizona in time for the Older Women's Conference to be held there on the weekend of February 18 through 21 (see notice on page 14). From there we plan to go to the West Coast--Los Angeles, San Francisco, perhaps as far north as Oregon if we can manage it; that is, if our finances hold out.

The purposes of our trip are to meet as many readers and other women as possible, to visit women's projects, to speak to interested groups. Please let us know without delay if your group is interested in discussing prime-time concerns with us, so that we can plan a schedule satisfactory to everyone. Our time span is flexible, probably about two weeks after leaving Vail. We'd also appreciate any offers of overnight hospitality from those of you who live along the way (we're bringing sleeping bags so don't need beds!).

(continued on page 9)

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ISADORA

DANCER & LOVER

EXTRAORDINARY



....I resent the conclusion formed by so many women that, after the age of forty, a dignified life should exclude all love-making. Ah, how wrong this is!

How mysterious it is to feel the life of the body, all through this weird journey on earth. First the timid, shrinking, slight body of the young girl that I was and the change to the hardy Amazon. Then the vine-wreathed Bacchante drenched with wine, falling soft and resistless under the leap of the Satyr, and growing, expanding; the swelling and increase of soft, voluptuous flesh, the breasts grown so sensitive to the slightest love emotion as to communicate a rush of pleasure through the whole nervous system; love now grown to a full blown rose whose fleshly petals close with violence on their prey. I live in my body like a spirit in a cloud--a cloud of rose fire and voluptuous response.

What nonsense to sing always of Love and Spring alone. The colours of autumn are more glorious, more varied and the joys of autumn are a thousand-fold more powerful, terrible, beautiful. How I pity those poor women whose pallid, narrow creed precludes them from the magnificent and generous gift of the Autumn of Love. Such was my poor Mother, and to this absurd prejudice she owed the aging and illness of her body at the epoch when it should have been most splendid, and the partial collapse of a brain which has been magnificent. I was once the timid prey, then the aggressive Bacchante, but now I close over my lover as the sea over a bold summer, enclosing, swirling, encircling him in waves of cloud and fire.

From My Life, by Isadora Duncan, pages 356, 357, Liveright, 1955.

Pioneering the Future

MARJORY COLLINS

(A paper prepared for the Mature Woman in Transition Conference,
Manchester, NH, October 1976)

I've been thinking what an enormous historical transformation is taking place in the consciousness of thousands, maybe millions of older women, and in the lifestyles of scores of others.

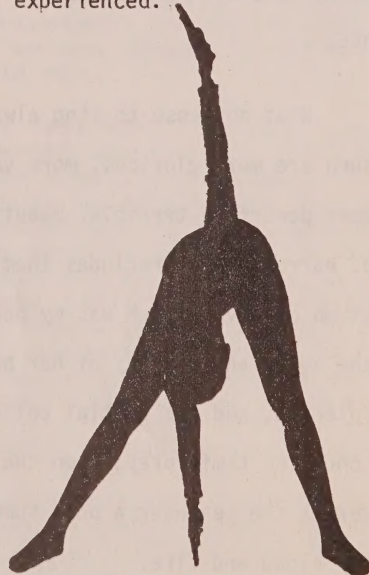
It is my opinion that we women--in our 40s, 50s and 60s--are pioneers. For we are exploring new territory. We are the first generations of women with such long life expectancy--up from 47 years at the turn of the century to 74 today. We are the first women to face several decades of living after our traditional roles of wives and mothers have been completed, decades in which we should have the opportunity to forge a new and fulfilling life for ourselves. But there are no maps charting this new territory. There are many obstacles along the way to be overcome. And pioneer life has never been easy. The strength to make this journey successfully can only come from within ourselves, in developing an assertive attitude toward life.

What does it mean for an older woman to become effectively assertive about her life? To express without fear what she believes and thinks--not only to her peers but to those whom custom and bureaucratic hierarchies present to her as authority figures? What does it take for her to risk losing the financial support of her husband to demand her own time-space for self-development? Or to endanger her employment by insisting on her rights in a work situation?

Not too many years ago, it might have been thought that such assertive actions and attitudes were quite unsuitable and certainly unfeminine for any woman. And as far as older women were concerned, when their wife-mother role was completed, they were expected to fade away into unassertive invisibility with far less glory than old soldiers. It seems incredible now that we remained tethered so long to this heavy tradition for which our entrenched, pervasive patriarchal socialization is largely accountable. Yet even in those dark ages, many of us were seething inwardly, laying the groundwork for revolt.

As we gradually emerged from our isolation from one another, we became aware of our growing numbers--discovering that there are over thirty million women over 45 in the United States (one-sixth of the entire population!). Some of us began to meet in small groups, to exchange experiences, to realize the commonality of our problems, and to realize that we were not personally responsible for the stereotypical roles which society expected of us. Above all, we realized that we were the best sources of information about ourselves, and that, by uniting together we would fight the inequities of our situation.

Some of the things we learned, and which we may have thought of previously as isolated cases, were that many women who had lived comfortably for many years as homemakers and wives find themselves thrown, untrained, into an unwelcoming job market. Other women, supporting themselves in reasonably well-paying jobs, find themselves downgraded in, or dismissed from their employment because of age. We found that what was most devastating, psychologically, for women in their middle years was the ageism expressed toward them from so many quarters. An ageism that compounded the sexism they had always experienced.



Because ageism has such a profoundly detrimental effect on the lives of older people, and especially on women, we at PRIME TIME decided the time had come to undertake some research into this pervasive "ism." What were its root causes in our culture? How, and at what point in a person's life are ageist attitudes acquired, were some of the questions we asked ourselves.

We started our research with a pilot project--the questionnaire in the November 1975 issue of PRIME TIME--entitled "What Does Ageism Mean to You?"--designed as a first step toward finding guidelines for a much larger, future study that would include a wide range of age groups and probably men and children. Therefore, this pilot study, answered by about 50 women, mostly in their 50s and 60s, makes no attempt to find conclusive answers.

Nevertheless, some of the self-revelations in the respondents' answers reveal the kind of self-transformations that aware older women are going through as they pioneer their way into the second half of their lives. I would like to quote from six of these women's responses because I believe that we can identify with what they are going through and perhaps be inspired by the way each one, in her own way, is breaking ground into that new territory as an autonomous, creative older woman. For some of these women, this journey has been harder than for others.

These women range in age from 51 to 61. They are picked regardless of their marital status, rather, because they have accepted themselves as older women in very positive and assertive ways. However, it should be mentioned that the one married woman among them, who is living with and being supported by her husband, doesn't have to worry about making a living--a considerable advantage for her, for the moment, at least.

The way all six women answered the following questions is of greatest interest here, in dealing with assertiveness. First question: "As a young woman, before you considered yourself an older woman, how did you feel about growing older? In other words, what were your expectations for the future?" Second question is a quadruple one: "When did you accept yourself realistically as an older woman? What precipitated your acceptance? Did you react positively or negatively? If your

feelings were negative, how did you resolve them?" And the third question: "How do you feel now about being an older woman?"



The answers to these questions by all six women reveal that each of them experienced a kind of "moment of truth" in their acceptance of being older--an experience precipitated by a variety of causes, but in almost every case accompanied by a short or long period of feeling ageism against themselves--which I see as a direct reflection of the ageism expressed toward older people by our society. Their first step toward reaffirming their lives in a positive way was to rid themselves of this ageism toward themselves. You will also see that the spectre of the importance of youthful appearance in our culture lurks behind almost all their answers. With all the flak that older women are subjected to by the youth culture, and with the discovery that their present reality so drastically differs from the expectations socialized into them in their youth, older women have to be assertive in their acts and words and thoughts to have a positive life free from anger and bitterness.

Take this married woman, 60 years old. She's been married 38 years, and is a homemaker and volunteer community worker. Previous to her "moment of truth" which occurred four years ago, she had not thought much about growing older. The shock of being

seen as an older woman came when, at the age of 56, she was traveling with a group of younger women who were dated, wined and dined wherever they went, whereas she was treated with respect, but left out of the partying. "I suddenly realized that I had crossed an invisible bridge that I would never reverse direction on, and it gave me a start," she writes. "I needed to get used to the idea that I would cross the 'sexual' barrier some day and be seen as a 'has been' by the American public.

Judging from the buoyancy of all her responses in the questionnaire, she probably overcame these negative feelings quite rapidly. Today she writes: "I feel fully my own person, free from 'shoulds,' 'oughts,' 'musts,' self-giving, and from limiting duty to home and community. I feel that life under my own steam, in my own control is just beginning. It is exhilarating. I use my energies now for my own self-development and fulfillment. I am becoming a one-person do-it-myself authority on anything that concerns me--health, education, entertainment, adventure, relationships. I listen to my own counsel, follow my own resurrected intuitions, work at creating optimum health through my own efforts (with success) and in general have become my own guru and physician. I feel liberated from a long, sticky period of role playing, stage-managed by everyone but myself, and am now moving into a period of being and becoming myself--which is unfolding and surprising me at every turn: so far, pleasantly, although not without serious confrontations with my husband about my 'right' to do so. These confrontations have been to a large degree successful, although involving inevitable compromise on both sides...."

This woman devotes half the year to being a wife, including entertaining her husband's business associates whom she finds uncongenial--but, for the other half a year she lives in a camper on San Francisco Bay, living as she wishes and has an entirely separate circle of friends. She is obviously privileged in many ways, enabling her new lifestyle to appear dramatic and, perhaps, exceptional. But her positive, assertive attitude toward life is shared by many other women in quite other circumstances.

Take the attitudes of a 51-year-old writer, who has been separated for 14 years, and

must support herself as well as contribute to her young daughter's expenses. She writes that her shocks about growing older came when she had bad job experiences at 40 and also hormonal imbalance before menopause. But she, too, has made being older a period of renewal. "I'm very happy about it now," she says. "My pace is slower because I slowed it, and I give in to my wisdom and intuition which I place high value on. My continuous change makes my life a greater adventure, for I function, not from my old responses, but from the place of change which is constantly news to me. I am much more reasoned and much more sure of myself."



A 53-year-old department manager, who never married, says: "I used to figure I'd get married and live happily ever after under the protective wings of a 'successful' husband. Then, when I approached my forties, and saw that in all likelihood I would remain single, I began to be concerned about two things in particular: (1) how would I make out financially? and (2) when would I reach the state of unattractiveness when I'd no longer have a man?" (The spectre of the importance of looks once again!)

This is how she describes her final moment of truth which occurred at the age of 48: "I never noticed a youth culture was developing until after the year mother died and I had a hysterectomy the same year. After that I was alone, I began to develop some flab, I became introspective, depressed. I got tired easily, felt seedy sometimes. I noticed that what was fashionable in clothes I looked silly in, that I couldn't relate to

the music the kids were into, and was surprised to read that the young radicals considered everyone over 30 obsolete. Since I thought of myself as a radical ... certainly a radical feminist ..."

By now, although she doesn't like the way she looks, this woman writes that her "psychological well-being is gradually improving from its recent years' slump in that I am learning to accept the physical deterioration of aging while enjoying the privilege of not caring about social mores, and just enjoying what I like to enjoy. I was not going to be cheated out of life so I started doing things ..." And she's been doing things ever since. Besides her job, she is starting a biorhythmic business of her own. "I love being older," she says. "People listen to what I say with respect. When I say I am writing a book no one laughs. When I say I am doing research on biorhythm compatibility they will try to help...."

Almost invariably, the positive, assertive women said their relationships with men had improved now that they no longer had to be content with being a "sex object." Here's what the department manager has to say: "I reach to men in general with a certain knowledge that I need not kiss their asses, that I am at least as interesting a person as they are, and that I do not require their assistance financially or otherwise. Hence I react much more independently and naturally than when I was husband hunting."

On the subject of men, a 52-year-old divorced woman speaks glowingly of her 28-year-old lover, and how she has, at least partially, overcome the culturally-induced embarrassment of appearing as a couple in public with a man so much younger. "...with me we're the same age. We just laugh all the time. He says he likes everything about me," she writes. "Even though he is 28 and I am 52 he is not ashamed to be seen in public with me. In fact, we even walk arm in arm and hold hands ... everything is perfect when we are together (almost three years now) until I see both of us together in a mirror. All of a sudden I don't feel so young any more. I hate seeing myself being so old and wonder how he could even love me..." Thus the spectre of appearance raises its ugly head again.

This divorcee recalls that as a young woman "I did not want to get fat or let myself go. I knew people would not love me if I was not pretty...." In spite of momentary regressions, she's come a long way toward exorcizing her earlier culture-reflected anxiety. Her turning point came at 40, when she suffered a breakdown due to her aloneness and the put-downs of her ambitions by her employers. "I got off the track," she reports. "I was alone and I remember that I was not going to let this society bury me because I was over 40 and not so pretty anymore. Getting over 40 and having a breakdown was the best thing that ever happened to me. When a person is down there is no place to go but up. It made me realize how precious life really is and I had not lived up until then."

Even though it is predicted by some that the future marriage pattern will be progressive; that is, a young woman's first marriage will be to an older man, and when she is older, she will marry a younger man--we older women are pioneers in this area. Not all of us have the same good experiences in relationships with younger men as the one woman I spoke about earlier. Another divorcee, 54, describes an incident that precipitated her acceptance of herself as an older woman: "I fell in love with a man 24 years younger than myself and felt helpless and the ridicule of the young women around me and his having been violently attracted to me, and then when I responded, his revulsion ... I didn't resent knowing I'd be old after that; I resented not having been allowed a fling"

Since then, this woman has built a positive and active life for herself in the women's movement, and looks back on the past with no regrets. "There are many reasons I'm glad I'm this age. Having children and being alone in my home for 30 years doing the best possible job of which I was capable was lonely. Being treated as an inferior though I wasn't fully verbally able to communicate this was a constant unhappiness that I did not even know I had until I went into consciousness-raising several years ago.... The women's movement told me for the first time in my life that I am physically attractive, that I am intelligent, that women like to listen to me talk and respect what I say and write...."

news and views

CALIFORNIA LEGALIZES RIGHT TO DIE

Governor Brown has signed into law the country's first "right to die" bill, which became effective this January 1. The law permits mentally competent people, whether ill or healthy at the time, to sign "living wills" directing physicians to terminate life-support measures which serve "no purpose except to artificially delay the moment of death." Among the law's limitations are a 14-day delay after signature before the directive can take effect, as well as automatic expiration five years after signature.

N.Y. TIMES, 10/3/76

NEW YORK WOW DOCUMENTS AGEISM

Women Office Workers (WOW) based in New York City has completed a study which proves the existence of ageist practices in many of the city's employment agencies--including N.Y. State Employment Service, Snelling and Snelling, Key Employment, Kellogg Employment Service, Avis Personnel Associates and Cosmopolitan Girl. Two women, one 50 and one much younger, went to the same agencies at the same times. The younger, with slightly less job qualifications, was rapidly referred to potential jobs whereas the older woman was offered the worst jobs or none at all. WOW has filed complaints of discriminatory treatment with the N.Y. State Division of Human Rights against the employment agencies.

RITUALS FOR NAMING, DYING AND DIVORCING

A book entitled Ritual in a New Day; an Invitation was produced by the Alternate Rituals Project of the Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church (available for \$3.75 from Abington Press, 201 8th Ave. South, Nashville, Tenn. 37203). Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers, who heads the task force, maintains that rituals "shape our being and are a way of declaring who we are and what we are about." Concerning the divorce ritual, she says: "We affirm the sanctity of marriage. But the church must respond with gifts of pastoral care to people who are hurting.... The church should play a clear role in

broken marriage just as it does when a person dies." She sees a parallel between the death of a person and the death of a relationship.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND THE FAMILY

OREGON WOMEN'S LAND

A group of Oregon women are purchasing 147 acres of land near Canyonville in the south of the state. Over the past two years they raised enough money for the down payment of \$18,850 and hope to pay off the total of \$65,000 (plus interest) very soon and to purchase more and varied areas of land. Several women homesteaders--as many as ecologically feasible--will live on this land which will also serve as a refuge for city women, a place to hold meetings and celebrations. For more information, write Oregon Women's Land, Box 1713, Eugene, Ore. 97401.

MASTECTOMY, NO EASY EXPERIENCE

A survey of women who underwent radical breast surgery has found that one in every four women patients had seriously contemplated suicide following the operation, and that two out of every 11 men, even after several years' time, were turned off by their wives and couldn't look at them unclothed. The study was conducted by Professor Robert Pasnau of UCLA who found that, contrary to popular belief, women did not seem to be reluctant to show their husbands their scars; it was the men who did not want to see them. Pasnau concludes that both women and men need to be psychologically prepared for the ordeal.

ZNS

FEMINIST NURSING HOME COMING UP?

A California woman was forced to enter a nursing home for a week of special treatment. Even though her supportive friends had searched out the best nursing home in the area, she found the experience so regimented and alienating that she later wrote an article for the Bay Area feminist paper, Plexus, entitled "I would Rather Take Cyanide. In it, she described her disagreeable sojourn

and suggested that it was high time to found a feminist nursing home based on the principles of mutual help and sisterhood. In a subsequent issue of Plexus, Carol Wisnieski of San Francisco responded enthusiastically... "I have a background in aging issues. worked in a nursing home and I'm a little bit older as each minute passes. I'd like to put some energy into developing this idea into a reality..." She asks that interested women get in touch with her. Her phone in San Francisco is 621-5392.

AGEISM REPORT HOT OFF THE PRESS

The Institute for the Study of Women in Transition has published PRIME TIME'S study, under the title AGE AND AGEISM. It is an analysis of the 47 responses to our questionnaire--"What Does Ageism Mean to You?"--published in the November 1975 issue of PRIME TIME. Although the findings of such a small pilot study have no "scientific" validity, many interesting trends appear to emerge which will serve as guidelines in the larger study we hope to get funding for--a study of women and men of all ages, from the teens to the 80s and 90s.

For example, it would seem that children regard older people on a one to one basis, as individuals they like, dislike, respect or fear, depending on the older person's behavior toward them. It is only when they have contact with their peers, in school and the outside world, that many of them develop ageist attitudes toward all older people. Most of the women had accepted themselves realistically as older women in their 50s, and the most prevalent reason was physical changes. Almost half the respondents had experienced ageism from men, and a third from their children.

The report is highlighted with direct quotes from the questionnaires (anonymous), and we wager that every PRIME TIME reader will see herself reflected at one juncture or another. AGE AND AGEISM is available for \$2.50 from The Institute, 40 Pleasant St., Portsmouth, N.H. 03801; phone: (603) 436-2922.

FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS GET JOB CREDIT

The Florida Commission on the Status of Women has completed a preliminary "Model for the Translation of Volunteer or Unpaid Experience into Job-Related Credit." The Commission has been building a talent bank of qualified people willing to serve in high level state positions and wanted to find a way to give credit for volunteer experience. The job descriptions and training programs of volunteer jobs in 22 organizations were compared with 216 upper level state positions requiring equivalent skills in order to evaluate voluntary experience in "salary" terms. Other states that either recognize or are developing guidelines to evaluate such experience are: Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia and Washington. The U.S. Civil Service also gives such credits.

Marriage, Divorce & the Family Newsletter

SEATTLE WOMEN PROTEST CLAIROL AD

A Clairol Loving Care Hair Color ad for gray hair that appeared in Good Housekeeping magazine last summer pictures a businesswoman with the headline, "On men, gray hair is distinguished. On me it's just plain old." The Seattle women protesting the ad claim that it emphasizes the inequalities suffered by women, the fact that men gain prestige with aging whereas women are made to feel ashamed. LNS



HOPING TO MEET YOU....(cont.)

We'll plan an issue of PRIME TIME around the trip. And if it's as successful as we hope, we may tour the East later in the year.

We look forward to meeting many of you face to face and wish you a super 1977. --M.C.

HAZARDS of PSYCHOTHERAPY

DOROTHY TENNOV CONTINUES THE DIALOGUE

I hope that those of you seriously interested in the subject of psychotherapy will read my book, Psychotherapy: The Hazardous Cure. In it, I try to clarify why I have made certain conclusions about psychotherapy. It is essential to distinguish "therapy" from the needed emotional support that seems (and perhaps is) attainable only in a one-to-one situation in which the client has the protection of confidentiality and nonjudgmentalism that is impossible with friends and difficult to achieve in group situations (e.g., "consciousness-raising groups"). I do not view CR groups as the substitute for what takes women to psychotherapists although for some CR has proved an alternative.

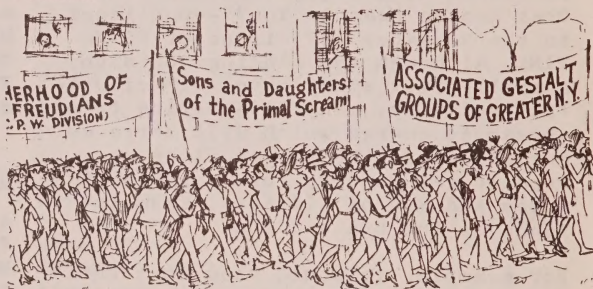
There are three basic problems with psychotherapy. First it is without scientific foundation. We do not know why therapy works if it ever does work and that we do not know how to train people to become therapists. There is good evidence that in the course of acquiring customary credentials such as M.S.W., Ph.D. and M.D., whatever talents we may have had might be lost, and that in finding good therapists we would do better to take people off the street than from the academic institutions. Therefore, to pay a therapist at going rates on the assumption that the high fee is deserved because of the "years of schooling" is unjustified. This is important because the high fees create a kind of therapy poverty that is itself one of the ways therapy harms. I have suggested in my C1C2 Project writings that we attempt to find a self-help method that would provide the service at a reasonable fee that women can afford instead of the fancy fees charged by "professionals."

The second thing that bothers me about therapy is the name. "Therapy" implies disease and cure. Being emotionally troubled and in need of someone to talk to about it is not the same as being sick. It is certainly not the same thing as being crazy. It is not the process of one-to-one interaction that is incompatible with feminism, but calling the client a mentally ill person. She's not sick just because she seeks counseling. Anyone who knows the literature knows that the medical terms are inappropriate. They only serve to confer mystique and hype the public. You might have a feminist consultant with

whom you discuss personal issues and you might pay her a fee, but if she calls you her "patient," she uses that term incorrectly and in a way that establishes an immediate hierarchy between you in which you are one-down.

It is hard to write briefly on this subject but I will content myself here with just one more point. That some people feel they have been helped by therapy does not mean it is safe. Evidence of therapy-induced harmfulness is documented in the professional literature itself (as are the other points I am making here).

We are not getting what we need and we may be getting something that will harm us. These are very important issues which I feel obliged to pursue in my role as consumer advocate.



If you are seeing someone whom you feel is helping you and the fee is not burdensome, I would be the last to advise you to quit. Credentials may not ensure success but they do not prevent it either. On the other hand, if you are seeing someone whom you feel is not helping, don't feel that because of their position (credentials) and yours (psychologically sick) you cannot make a decision to leave. Trust your judgment. Since Psychotherapy: The Hazardous Cure was published, many women have spoken to me of the pain and humiliation they suffered (crying after each session is not rare) in silence because they felt that it must be they themselves who are at fault.

Psychotherapy has done a lot of harm. It needs to be replaced by something less dangerous, less expensive, and something that does not imply the stigma and insult of psychiatric terminology. ■

The Women of the World are serving notice

A Taped Interview with Selma James PART 2

Selma James is one of the original thinkers behind and founders of the international Wages for Housework (WHW) movement, along with Mariarosa Dalla Costa, a professor at Padua University in Italy. Selma James was born in Brooklyn, New York, 43 years ago but has lived in Trinidad and London for the past 25 years. As a teenager, active in the left movement in the United States, she says: "Whenever I was asked to speak, I talked about the woman question. Nobody else did in those days, but they let me because they thought it was cute." Selma makes her living now by transcribing BBC tapes, and is extremely active in the London Committee for Wages for Housework (there are WHW groups in Italy, Canada and the United States as well as in Great Britain).

This interview by Marjory Collins took place in London in April 1976 when she was there to arrange for the distribution of PRIME TIME in England.

Copies of the August/September issue containing Part 1 of this interview are available from PRIME TIME for \$1.

Apologies to Selma for our failure, in the introduction to Part 1, to mention that she co-authored "Women and the Subversion of the Community" with Mariarosa Dalla Costa.

MC: Tell me, what do the older women here in England live on? Do they have a pension?

SJ: Yes, at 60. And in this country, the pensions are, first of all, scandalously low. Second of all, if the husband of a woman who has always been a full-time housewife is on a pension and separates from that man, she's only entitled to £8 of the £21 that "the couple" gets.

MC: We at least get half at home, which is a small bonus.

SJ: They share the poverty in different ways. But, really, sharing the poverty is not what we're on about. The kind of dependence that the very old and the very young are forced to undergo is a direct result of the fact that only those who are getting a wage have any status or power.

MC: Could you talk for a minute about the way you see the role of the unions as working with capital more than for workers?

SJ: Well, the very fact that unions are organizations which are (supposedly) set up to be of use to those people who have wages excludes most of the population, because most of us don't have wages.

MC: That's true; but when unions first started they were kind of progressive; that workers should organize at all was progressive. But, I feel that they have outgrown this role, that they are more and more enmeshed with the bosses.

SJ: They certainly are.

MC: And that they perpetuate the differences between the various groups in the working class, by calling for more wages, more benefits.

SJ: Well, calling for more wages is not what perpetuates differences. The lowest paid can--or rather should--get the highest raise to break differentials. But I don't think unions do call for more wages. At the moment they're helping the state negotiate with workers on how big the wage freeze is going to be.

MC: That's what's happening here. Right.

SJ: Well, a wage freeze is a wage cut. And whether we're working for wages, or it's the men we depend on who are working for wages, we know that if the wages go down, the house-keeping money goes down. And we know that we work much harder when there's less money. We can't eat out as much; we have to cook at

home. We can't buy that washing machine; we have to wash by hand. We spend a lot of our mental energy wondering whether it's cheaper to buy beans at this shop, or go four blocks down in order to get beans where it's one half pence cheaper. Can you imagine, our minds are being taken up with such trivia! That's an insult to us. It's a degradation to us. It's work, and it's work we don't want to do. It's forced upon us the less and less money that we have. But if you really look, we women have just been crossed out of the working class, crossed out of the possibility of struggle, crossed out of consideration of whether our time or lives are important. If we're very young we're not entitled to money at all. We have to get up very early in the morning, go to school, do schoolwork, come home from school and do schoolwork again. If we're women, if we're girls, we help our mothers in the house; we do a lot of housework. Nowadays, boys also do some of that. When we reach a certain age, where we can't go out to work, or where we are made redundant by the men that we're married to (where he leaves us for another woman), we either try to get a job, which is very difficult to get because youth and productivity go together. Or, if we're thrown onto a pension (or welfare), we're again dependent people, and by this time we're also very tired from having worked all of our lives. And if we're women, we're continuing to do work, continuing to do housework. Even if we're in that single furnished room. It's not less housework. If you live in one room in some senses it's more housework, because you must keep it tidy all the time, otherwise you're living in a permanent mess. And keeping a certain order in that room is in some ways more important than if you have a big apartment, because your mind gets very disordered if you only have one disorderly room. It's the one place you can invite friends to. Your whole social life revolves around that one room. So that your actual amount of housework when you live alone, although it may not appear as great, it's as demanding, and just as connected with your survival. You don't stop doing housework, even if your space is cut down. We never stop.

MC: About this wages for housework demand, you told me that you really mean it. That you really think it's possible to get it.

SJ: Yes.

MC: I'd like to know how you think it's possible.

SJ: I think it's possible to get it because it's such a broad front of unification among women. Now we know that the women's movement has talked about sisterhood. But we feel that sisterhood has to be made really concrete, and we have to say who and who is our sister and who and who is not our sister. It's true that all women, no matter what their status in society, are shaped by the fact that most of us don't have money for our housework. But it's also true that some women have really escaped housework. The Queen of England, I don't think, needs wages for housework, because I don't think she does very much. She's one of the richest people in the world, and she is going to have to pay our wages.

MC: Of course if Britain fell she might not be rich.

SJ: Well, if Britain fell, we would none of us be housewives. I mean as far as I'm concerned that's the first thing to go. Not because you would stop sweeping the floor. I don't know how you would keep a house after that. I don't know what kind of a house we'd live in. I don't know how



we would live. I know that this one has to go. What we'll replace it with will not be designed on Margaret Mead's drawing board, but on many of us coming together and deciding how we would like to shape the world. And it's about time that we did. But the point is that housework--because so many of us do it, and because all of us are weakened by the fact that we have to do it--is the most fundamental and broadest terrain on which we can organize.

MC: By the way, many women in New York are doing practically no housework. They're just neglecting everything. And it's understandable. I don't do very much housework, just enough to keep the papers straight. But it's uncomfortable, and you want to do more. But I know that I'll never do enough to make me satisfied with the way it looks. And I don't know how to cope with that, because after all we're living today.

SJ: Yes. And we're always balancing the housework budget. I mean, how much can we stand of dust, as compared to how much time can we afford to give to dusting? We're all in that dilemma. We make our different calculations and every once in a while we say, well, everything has got to go, and I must clean this house, because otherwise I just can't bear it. Women are more and more cutting down on their housework, because women are more and more finding other things that they want to do. I think that's one of the most important things about the campaign for Wages for Housework, because women so want money of their own that they are ready to stop doing more and more housework in order to go and be with women to organize to get that money.

MC: So how do you think it's going to come about here in England?

SJ: The same way it's going to come about in the United States and in other countries and it's not going to come about here in England unless it does come about in other countries as well. I think it has to be international or it doesn't work at all. It will come about by our continually putting our struggles together, and seeing what is the common component of those struggles.

We went to speak to groups of pensioners--and you should know that three-quarters of the pensioners in Britain are women--and some of them were very enthusiastic and said, "I should have been getting money all the time for all

the work I've been doing." But some of them said, "If you get wages for housework, they'll give us less in pension." This is exactly how the governments have put us one against the other; they say the same thing to younger women, that if pensioners get a rise then there's less for the younger ones. They are always pitting those of us who have very little against each other, saying that there's only this size pie, and if you take too big a slice, you take some from someone else. But it isn't a pie that size at all. There's an enormous amount of wealth and we are all entitled to have it because we're the ones who made it. We made that wealth. That wealth didn't just come about. It didn't just grow like Topsy, you know. It came because we worked very hard in our kitchens, in offices and factories, we women and we men, and we have a right to that money. And women really have been organizing as pensioners, and demanding an increase in pensions. It's been the women who have led that struggle.

On the other hand, there are the unsupported mothers, whom you in the States call welfare mothers, who have been fighting for an increase in their money. Fighting very hard and saying, "We work and we don't want to take a job outside the home. We already have a job here." Other women have been fighting for nursery schools and saying the state has an obligation to give our children a nursery school in order for us to have some time to ourselves--not only if we want to go out to work, but if we don't want to go out to work, if we want to have some time with our friends. We have a right to have some time of our own.

All of these are Wages for Housework issues because all are struggles against housework and for money. And to the degree that we can come together and bring these struggles together at each point where we are fighting, we will be much stronger and we'll be able to win.

MC: I'm interested in--this sounds as though I'm changing the subject but I'm really not--all the nonwhite people who've been let into the country from your Commonwealth countries, and in their position here as I've noted it. They're all doing the lowly jobs. Do you think the capitalists encouraged this, in order to divide the working class even more?

SJ: When you said "have been let in," they really haven't been let in, they were invited

in. The people from the West Indies and from the Subcontinent--India, Pakistan, Bangladesh--were invited in, to take the jobs that people from England in particular, but also from Scotland and Wales and Ireland, were really beginning to refuse, saying, we don't want to do this work at these wages any more.

MC: How about unemployment resulting from that?

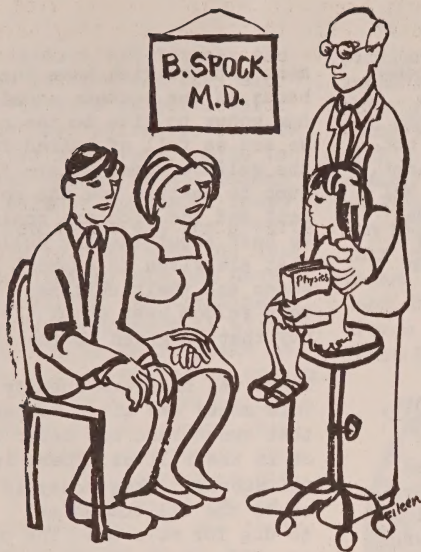
SJ: Unemployment did not result from that. Because there was full employment in this country until a few years ago. The unemployment now has really been to frighten us, and to let us know that if we don't continue to work and even to work harder, that we would be left to starve. Most people have been saying we're not going to take that, which is why the struggle for wages has not been undercut by the rising unemployment figures--which is the effect, for example, that it had in the 1930s. It's had the opposite effect here. (And not only here.)

During the miners' strike in 1974 they asked some miners "How long do you think you'll hold out during the strike? After all, your money will run out soon." And the miners said, on the radio, "That shop across the road has a lot of food. Even if we don't have any, the shop has it." And they had every intention of going and taking it. No one need starve any more. More and more of us are determined that we're not going to have to be exploited in order to eat. That's what we women are saying. Only it's not been clear that we've been exploited, because it seemed we've been working only for the people whom we are related to. The people whom we are related to are statistics in the government's eyes, are the labor force in the government's eyes. They're not our husbands and brothers, and fathers. They're three men, three units of production. We are producing units of production for them all the time, and our relation to them has hidden that that's what we are producing. When we say Wages for Housework, we say we're working, and we're working for the same boss the man is working for. And he has a privilege over us because he has money that we don't have. And we don't want to be dependent on him.

MC: One of the things that has been said against Wages for Housework is that if we should get them we'd be more stuck with housework than ever. How do you answer that? I mean, wouldn't the men be unwilling to share it with us then?

SJ: Well, you have to look at why the men haven't been willing to share it with us in the past. And that's because they haven't had to. We've been so dependent on them that we've had to bargain with them, we've had to go on little sex strikes. That headache that we have occasionally, and that tiff we decide to have a particular night, and go through the three or four days of bad humor until we get something, are our industrial action. And if we wanted something more than a man offered freely, we had to make the meal that he likes, and do the things that he likes and be nice to his family, and all kinds of things. We've always been very dependent on him and always live with the awareness that he had that power. Once we have money of our own, the relationship between us and men will radically alter.

Now we're not saying that exploitation will disappear. But we're saying that exploitation will be bared, and the one thing that will happen is that we will not be so differently exploited, our interests will not be seen as so different, since when we demand the help from men in the home or with children, they will know that if they're not going to give that help, we have the power to walk out of that relationship. And I don't think we're going to have to announce that in bold letters, if we have money in our pockets. I think the proof of whether we can do that is already emerging in our struggle for wages. When we even demand wages for housework, men understand very well the duality of that demand. They understand that they will not have the burden of us as dependents, that discipline to keep their noses to the grindstone. But they understand also that the kind of power that they've had over us is being undermined. They know that the whole relationship will change dramatically even by demanding wages for housework. We're really saying that housework is work, and if they don't want to share it with us they can go elsewhere--if they think they can get their housework done elsewhere. But because we're all going to get that wage, it's not going to be easy for men to pit us against each other. We're not going to be in competition for men's favors. And this is really crucial in terms of the older women, because one of the ways that we've been divided is between beautiful



"If you follow my advice we may have caught it in time. Teach her to cook and clean..."

and ugly, between respectable and not respectable, and between young and old. When we're all in the race for productivity, we are divided as women. When we all are demanding a wage and getting a wage, those divisions begin to disappear. Because we are not offering ourselves on that labor market which is called the marriage market, the couple-relationship market. Nowadays, marriage may be out for some people, but that doesn't mean that living with a man is not making a family. It is a family relationship, because the power differential remains whether or not it's codified in a legal document. Therefore, demanding a wage for housework is demanding to be de-institutionalized as housewives; saying, "It's not my nature to do this work, it's a job I'm doing, and if you don't help me to do that job, well, move out, or I will. I can support the children, I can support myself, I'm getting money for my work as you are for yours. It may not be much. You're not getting much either, you never have. I've always had to slave and sweat to stretch the money that you've brought in, anyway. I'm in no worse a position if I'm by myself now than if I'm with you. And these are the terms of the relationship. "Now let us look at ourselves and maybe, maybe now you'll be sure that, when I sleep with you, it's because I want to, and not because I have to curry favor."

MC: That's tremendous! You propose that everyone get the same wage? And it will be a living

wage? In other words, enough to live by yourself?

SJ: Yes.

MC: So that's considerable money.

SJ: Yes, it is. Well, we do considerable work.

MC: Yes, I know we do--in spite of my bad housekeeping. Then you propose that all women get it, including the Queen, or from the Queen on down. You propose that all people get this extra wage for housework, even if they have plenty of money being doled out by their men?

SJ: Well, we don't have plenty of money doled out by our men. The Queen, her sister and her daughters dole out the money to their men. I mean that's what makes them rather unique in this society. Most of us are really stuck in marriages and stuck in our relations with men especially if we're at the dangerous age, where the lines in our faces are showing, and where our muscles are not so firm, and where we are not being sought after by other men--which is a way of keeping our men because we're demonstrating that we're doing alright on the labor market. When we're not doing all right on that unwaged labor market, as I said before, the men can desert us. They can leave us in the lurch as they so often do. But even when we maintain those relationships, we're really stuck in them, and when we want to walk out we don't have the money to do it, even if the man is doling us out money for clothes, food for our children, for a good and tastefully decorated house, for hair-dressing. All of these are qualifications for our job of being his wife, for our being his hostess, for our being the symbol of his success. Some of us may have plenty of money for that, but money to walk out, we don't have it. Sometimes we don't have busfare. This is a reality which is widespread, I know, in the United States. I'm not only talking about England.

MC: I know very well it is.

SJ: A lot of women don't even want to think about that. And they don't want to see that only a man separates them from the welfare line. Only a man, and he can go any day.

MC: That's a slogan we have: Every woman is one man away from welfare.

(turn to page 24)

Readers write....

OLDER WOMEN MOST IGNORED

I admire PRIME TIME's clean, sharp emphasis on the older woman, the person most ignored by most of today's professional feminists and fem-mags. The truth is, as statistics tell us, it is older women who are rapidly beginning to outclass younger women in both population and market appeal because, although they represent the poorest among us, they also represent the wealthiest.

So I agree with those of your readers who protest that PRIME TIME is "too negative." As a new subscriber I, too, am impatient with the rather endless outpourings of letters from women castigating themselves for not, as one example, having been more supportive of their own mothers. To some degree all of us feel acute guilt in any relationship, and I see no reason for PRIME TIME to convert itself into a therapist's couch.

It seems to me that the feminist movement is still so muddled up that we women as yet can count on little except ourselves--on our own talents, initiative, ingenuity, perseverance--to beat the system. We are all one race of varying colors and background, and it is still up to each one of us to develop and deliver what we have. Of course this is true of men, too.

At a very early age I was raising two small daughters all by myself, faced with the need to parlay a strictly academic education into a career worth some money in the marketplace. Somehow it was managed. Somehow, too, it was fun all the way. At least it's happier to

remember the fun. I'm convinced that women are immensely resourceful, the results of centuries of not particularly benign neglect. I'm convinced we should all cherish whatever gifts we have--each one of us has something!--and make them work for us!

Helen Alpert
New York, NY

GOV'T WELFARE OK'D FOR OIL, DOCTORS & FARMERS

I love your paper. I was reading one of your older issues. I didn't have time to get to it before. I was reading about Wages for House-Work. That was sure on! Now I have something I want to get off my chest.



The establishment has to keep women on welfare. They are used as the whipping women. The establishment keeps pointing the finger at these women saying "They are draining our pockets. They are to be persecuted for being so lazy and refusing to work. Hate them!" All the while we are standing there hating these women, the govern-

ment and the rich have their hands in our pockets stealing our money to give to the rich. We are so full of hatred for the welfare women we are too numb to analyze how the government and the rich are coning us. We hear about the few dollars that are given to support these women and their children but we very seldom hear about the money that is given to the rich.

There was the farm subsidy. This money was given to people that owned land but never farmed in their lives. There is the oil subsidy. This money is given to the oil companies to dig for more oil. The oil companies have always used the ruse "We are running out of oil." They tell us this because they want to keep us scared so they can make more profit. They pulled this same kind of oil shortage scare about 50 or so years ago. That is why we (the taxpayers) have to pay for making a few rich people richer.

California just voted to build a new cancer research hospital. The voters turned down everything else that would require money including housing for the old. Now, a cancer hospital is just welfare for doctors. As long as the government is paying for this, what doctor in his right mind would want to find a cure for cancer. If they did, that would mean their cushy jobs would be gone. By keeping the public so worked up about cancer they keep the doctors rich. We, the women, should start pointing our fingers at these practices and whip the ones that are the wrongdoers.

If you keep the people scared they will give you anything. Notice the oil companies,

Readers write....

the doctors and farmers are given welfare and they are treated with respect. The woman that raises her children for the state and to be slaves to the establishment are held in contempt. These big companies and the government would not have all that money if they did not have these slaves. By treating them with contempt it will keep them in their place so they will be easier to manage. I am out of a job right now. I worked for a company that has a lot of government contracts. The government did not pay their bills so the company had to let all their support people go in June. The government did not pay their bills because they wanted to throw people out of work so by election time the party in office would be able to say "Look what we did for you. We got the prices down." I saw a little weak spot announcement on that subject but it did not work. They did not force the prices down.

After ten years on that job I am out of work. Now they will be pointing the finger at me saying "Look how lazy she is. She doesn't want to work for a living. Hold her in contempt. Hate her"! I am 53 years old. Thank you for listening.

Irene Stephenson
Chatsworth, CA.

DRIVING OPENS AVENUES

One of the things that keeps older women isolated and dependent is not being able to drive a car. Recently, I spoke at a meeting in a town I was not familiar with and, when the women were asked about their

particular problems, one woman's story went like this: She couldn't get around well because she didn't drive. The only reason she could come to that meeting was that she had heard on the radio that rides would be provided. She said her husband didn't have the patience to teach her because he expected her to



know all the parts of the car and how they operated.

At the Alliance for Displaced Homemakers where I work, we get many letters from women with the same problem. They live in rural areas or small towns with no public transportation and they are isolated.

At the meeting where I spoke, I said that I would like to see older women as driving instructors because many women would prefer taking lessons from another woman. Someone at the meeting said she could teach driving, and we wondered if the cars used by high schools in their driving courses might be available on weekends and at night.

Besides opening up more avenues--business and social--learning to drive will give an older woman a feeling of

accomplishment that could lead to other successes.

If you would like to become a driving instructor, go to your local schools and try to convince them that there is a large group of potential students who would take lessons from a woman.

Martha Gresham
El Cerrito, CA.

HOW SWEET IT IS!

Just enjoyed my PRIME TIME. It looked so rich that I saved it for a time when I could really soak it in instead of skimming and I was right.

The new layout is a real improvement--the interview with Selma James--the Tish Sommers piece--the great answer-letters to the questionnaire--everything! SUPER!

And I like the new credit list much better than the other listing by jobs.

Thanks and keep going.

Rena Hansen
City Island, NY.

POOR, POORER & POOREST

As I read "Mobilization for Aging" in the June issue of PRIME TIME, this sentence struck me "Elderly blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and native Americans live in triple jeopardy not only because of age, but also because they are nonwhite and, in most instances, poor."

I don't know if this writer has done much reading on white racism, but this seems to me to be a common example of it. The statement seems to imply that "we whites" are one step better off, because we are

Readers write....

not, in most instances, poor. That's not true of course, but we seem to think of ourselves as "not poor"--at least not as poor as "blacks."

Most blacks are poor and most whites are poor; most people are poor. Lundberg in The Rich and the Super Rich defines poor as "anyone who does not own a fairly substantial amount of income-producing property or does not receive an earned income sufficiently large to make substantial regular savings or does not hold a well-paid securely tenured job."

I tend to agree. About 1.6% or thereabouts hold this country's wealth. The rest are poor. I want to remind us of this. I think we are purposefully led to forget our "poor-ness," and one way to do this is to find someone else and call them poorer.

Mary Richards
Bradford, NH

FEMINISTS BRAINWASHED?

How about a "No Comments" section for stuff like this ad?

Learn to Love Yourself
By Getting Divorced from Mother and Dad
A SPIRITUAL ALTERNATIVE TO THERAPY
The Fischer-Hoffman Process

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San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 397-0466

It might help to raise consciousness among us. I've just lost another friend over my refusal to see how "natural" it is for mothers and grown offspring to stop seeing each other. It amazes me that even feminist women will buy that brainwash.

Thanks for all you're going.

Jane Radcliffe
San Francisco, CA.

CATCH 22

As a long time enthusiast of PRIME TIME, I hope you will print this letter in the next issue. I would like very much to hear from women in similar situations on their reaction to a universal (and unequal) dilemma.

This summer my husband, age 56, became disabled (from alcoholism) and lost his job and his entire income. He is in a state hospital now.

For many years, I was the traditional mother and housewife, raising three daughters. After they went to school, I was able to go to work. The eldest daughter is now married, but two are still at home, ages 14 and 13. My working enabled us to pay off the mortgage only recently, but here's the catch 22!

Now that we do own the house, we are penalized for it, by 1) not qualifying for disability benefits from Social Security because the house is paid for (and a three-year-old car also), and 2) I would have to put a lien against the house if I applied for public assistance money for the support of my children and myself. If I were forced to sell the house I would then have to pay rent and probably

would still need assistance, because I have been out of work since May of this year. There is no other income.

I have been unable to find employment, since I am 46 years of age, a "bad risk" age for hiring.

Thanks to food stamps we can eat, but the only way that we can save the house now is for me to find employment, or someone willing to move in to help pay the utility, tax and other bills. Otherwise we are just one more casualty in the land of welfare, which is a very depressing possibility for me.

There is no protection for minor children in the law at all when this kind of tragedy hits. We never had the money to buy insurance either.

Is there a solution, before doom?

Depressed,

Ingrid Gleeson
Harrisburg, PA.

PRIME TIME for Prime Time

For some time I've been wanting to write you about how very valuable I consider PRIME TIME to be. It is informative, lively, supportive, and creative. PRIME TIME implicitly and explicitly articulates the imperatives of indivisible human rights. I admire your courage, persistence, audacity and caring. You can count on my continued support wherever and however I can. Keep on keeping on in prime time and all the time.

Wilma Scott Heide
Framingham, MA.

WOMEN ARTISTS GROUP OF THE NORTHWEST

For information about
this newly formed group,
write them at PO Box
9462, Seattle, WA 98109.

SEEKING GRAY PANTHERS?

The Aug.'76 issue of
Gray Panther Network
lists 77 emerging groups
in 41 states. Write them
at 3700 Chestnut St.,
Philadelphia, Pa. 19103.

HELP FOR FUNDRAISERS

Project SHARE of the
Women's Action Alliance
(370 Lexington Ave., N.Y.
N.Y. 10017) offers fund-
raising information and
technical assistance.

OLDER ADULTS TRAINING PROGRAM

The Projects on Aging
at the University of WA
School of Social Work
offers stipends to adults
55 years of age or older
who desire graduate
level training in SW with
concentration on work
with the elderly. Write:
Phyllis Myhr, Dir. Older
Adults Training Program,
School of Social Work,
U. of WA, 1417 NE 42nd.
St., Seattle, WA 98105.

OLDER WOMEN TO MEET IN ARIZONA

An Older Women's confer-
ence will take place at
Nourishing Space (see
Aug./Sept. PT p.9) over
weekend of Feb. 18-21.
For details contact:
Kittu Riddle, Cave Can-
yon Ranch, PO Box D-11,
Vail, AZ 85641.

MEN..

For Better

I'm Garson Kanin of New York,
replying as a private citizen
to a recent Channel 2 [WCBS-TV,
NYC] editorial which closed by
saying: "As a practical matter,
we think mandatory retirement
does make sense if the age
chosen is a reasonable one."

Nonsense. Working men and
women should retire for two
reasons only: if they want to
retire or if they are unable
to function. These conditions
may occur at age 42, or 26, or
38, or 87.

Setting a precise age is folly.
We are all, thank God and
nature, different. I know many
young people in their 70's and
a few old fogies of 40.

As a man condemned to death
reckons his remaining days,
he's conditioned. Four more--
three more--two--one--and he's
ready for it.

A man who is told that on his
65th birthday he'll be no
longer useful, lives through
the same sort of agonizing
countdown--and finally allows
a silly system to transform
him overnight into a super-
fluous nonentity.

What's the difference between
killing a man and not allowing
him to live?

Of all the dangerous and des-
tructive "isms" that have
plagued this century, ageism
is the most stupid.

It's time to declare war on
the mindless youth cult that
has us in its grip. It's de-
moralizing our people, weaken-
ing our structure, depleting
our energy, wasting our experi-
ence, and blowing out some of
the best of our brains.

For Worse

...I wish you and the others
who write for PRIME TIME knew
something--in fact anything--
about economics. There is some
of the damndest bilge in those
pages that I've ever seen.
Granted I comment from a posi-
tion of prejudice--I am no be-
liever in women's liberation,
I am male, and I don't think
women should have the vote.
But aside from those little
things, I bristle at the bland
assumptions that "they are go-
ing to have to pay us," that
they won't let us starve, etc.
This is just pure hogwash, and
it suggests a leading on of
poor, unfortunate people into
a never-never world of false
hope and false assumption.
There simply have to be other
ways of attacking the problems
of ageing women other than giv-
ing them the idea that they can
take to the streets, do battle
with the long arm of authority,
and come off with a paycheck
for housekeeping and grey hairs.

Maybe PRIME TIME wouldn't have
its audience if it didn't take
its stance in dreamland. But I
would suspicion that there
would be a lot more chance to
support the publication if it
were a more nearly sane in its
economics, and more down to
earth practical in what it sug-
gests its readers can do to
have more meaningful lives....

(Signed) C.V.P.

[From a letter to the editor
from an old "friend" to whom
she had written for business
advice.]





A Woman of Passion

HANNAH TILlich WANTED TO BE EVERYTHING!

(A Book Review)

If you prefer to view your Great Men from the pristine splendor of history's retrospective pages, *From Time to Time** will not please you. If you like your Great Women serene or dignified, calm or comforting, Hannah Tillich is not the woman for you to read. If, however, you want your men three-dimensional and whole, your women creative and honest, totally alive, then you will enjoy reading Hannah Tillich's memoirs, *From Time to Time*.

From Time to Time is a completely irreverent book about Hannah Tillich's life with Paulus (Paul Tillich), the well-known German theologian and a leader in the religious socialist movement. Scathingly honest and perceptive, she has disdained playing the role of myth-maker for her famous husband; whatever one says about *From Time to Time*, it is not just another love story written by a doting wife.

Instead, while we have a candid glimpse of a Paulus generally unknown to his neo-orthodox readers, by far the most interesting story is Hannah's.

The book is suffused with her eroticism, her passion for the experience of love and life. From the first surreal parable where she says, "When I was seventeen, I wanted to be everything, male and female, a self-sufficient hermaphrodite," Hannah moves freely from woman to man, seeking more than all else to reach the extremes of sensation of which she was capable.

She possessed a mystical attachment to the spirit, a sense of cosmic-mindedness. "I was eager to become a human being, but what set me on fire was the spirit and the mind." Life was the celebration to which she was called. "Our flagrant desire to live/ Knowing about Death--/Have we not become possessed/To celebrate the feast of life."

Indeed, Hannah Tillich frequently suffered from the emotional excesses which her strength of spirit and will produced. "I would burst into a rage. I could rave beautifully, unexpectedly pouring streams of abuse on my poor adversary." During an illness when Paulus's betrayals weighed heavily on her, she "lay in bed, raving that the hatred I felt within me would destroy me. I felt poisoned by my hate against Paulus." At last, slowly, she began to gain control of herself through the practice of yoga.

Her attachment to Paulus was a curious mixture of the impossibly inevitable. It was as impossible that he limit his flirtations and romances and provide her with the strength and protection she craved as it was for her to end her search for ever-expanding involvement and strength of identity.

But, it was equally impossible for them to separate with any finality. Their lives seemed to cross at some existential point which bound them inextricably to one another.

These opposing forces were not easy to live with. Even while she acknowledged her needs and sought some kind of reconciliation of spirit, Hannah suffered excesses of jealousy over Paulus's women. "He never protected me, he always protected the other woman. It took me years to realize that the hostility of the other woman toward me was just as painful to her as my hostility and sorrow were to me."

Even after his death, she was torn by his betrayal of her needs. "I unlocked the drawers. All the girls' photos fell out, letters and poems, passionate appeal and disgust.... I was tempted to place between the sacred pages of his highly esteemed lifework those obscene signs of the real life that he had transformed into the gold of abstraction--Kind Midas of the spirit."

continued on page 22

* *From Time to Time*
by Hannah Tillich
New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1974.

Graphics on pp. 21 & 22 by
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Two of Opera's Heroines

AIDA AND LENORA, WOMEN OF COURAGE

Esther Labovitz



We were talking the other day, Marjory and I, about strong women, and my thoughts strayed as usual to images of women in the arts, and how it is that in opera, almost invariably, we find strong women characters.

I am thinking of Aida and I am thinking of Leonora in the Verdi and Beethoven operas, respectively. Verdi managed to call his opera after the leading female character; Beethoven's title, Leonora, or the Triumph of Wedded Love, was scrapped in favor of Fidelio (the title with which we are familiar) against his wishes. Since Fidelio is actually Leonora, to all intents and purposes the work is named after the female leading character.

I am thinking of Aida, a slave, daughter of an Ethiopian king, captured by the Egyptians in battle. A slave, by force, she is also enslaved psychologically by her love for Radames, an Egyptian soldier. Submissive, timid, tearful whenever we meet her, she is a competitor, nevertheless, to Amneris, the Pharaoh's daughter, who also loves Radames. The eternal triangle--all is set up for the stereotypical love story. When Aida sees that Radames' marriage to Amneris is inevitable (the king has so ordered) she is prepared to commit suicide for love of him. But then something happens that gives us a new perspective on Aida and on women in love. It is this unexpected ingredient, strengthening and non-stereotypical, that we find in opera and that is generally lacking in women characters of novels, for instance.

In the renunciation scene, as Aida contemplates suicide in an aria of unparalleled beauty, she sings of her beloved native land which she will never see again, of her tomb beneath the dark waters of the Nile, and of the peace she will find, at last. Suddenly, her father appears. He, too, was captured by the Egyptians and has

been keeping an eye on Aida and knows she is having her final rendezvous with Radames. He informs her that his countrymen are preparing another attack on Egypt and he wants Aida to aid them. In short, Aida is transformed suddenly before our eyes from a helpless woman in love to a woman who has been chosen to carry out a grave task. She is asked to find out by what path the Egyptian army will travel and by her bravery in getting the information she will save her country from defeat and its women from rape, her father urges. At first, Aida balks at the thought of betraying Radames, but when her father summons up the image of her dead mother she is won over. The scene which follows is most crucial to her development. When Radames approaches her he expresses his ecstasy at seeing her once more; but Aida has changed from a helpless woman, suicidal and in love, to a woman with a mission outside herself. From the moment she has found something OUTSIDE to work toward, she is able to hold her love in check; while Radames sings rapturously, she holds herself aloof from his promises. It is a significant scene in the annals of women in love. What is suggested to us is that love, which has never had the all-encompassing demand upon men that it has had on women, is not biologically determined, after all. The poets notwithstanding, men have always been attached to the world outside; while women have always been told they are biologically built for the function of love and sacrifice. When we think about Aida, we are reminded that despite her love for Radames (and we make no value judgment of that love, for which she does, ultimately, choose to die) she acts in an autonomous manner, as an individual with visions of freedom, of dignity and self-respect. You might cavil and say, "Well, then, did she not act in accordance to her obedience to her father?" However, it is one thing to obey a father unconditionally and submissively on, let us say, questions of marriage and career, the two most important issues con-

HANNAH...continued

But, if she was sorely tried, she was also strengthened by her experiences. Gradually she expanded her self-awareness. Of her first marriage she says, "I pretended to be what my first husband wanted me to be, the body beautiful.... He drew, painted, and worshiped me.... It was by walking through the door of my intellect that I left him."

And, once her journey was begun, she moved forward with an indomitable will. Throughout *From Time to Time* she writes on a personal level which expresses absolute certainty in the importance of her goals. "I fought," she says, "for a conscious,

personal self, though I always felt in danger of becoming the matter on which another person's mind fed. I fought for survival as an independent center. My desire was to become my own constellation."

From Time to Time is a beautifully written story by a woman who has lived her life with a passion few of us are able to capture. In a very real sense, Hannah Tillych has lived the theological concepts which her husband developed. In her search for the sweetness of life she took up the burden of sin and grace and said "yes" to her own being.

Reviewed by Cheryl Peck in the Women's Community Journal, Her-self. June 1975.

AIDA...continued

fronting a young woman in her life. But it is another thing to agree to undertake a mission with the understanding of its consequences and choose more or less freely to carry it out; a mission that is usually and more typically assigned to a young man. Aida succeeds in carrying out her mission but, in so doing, brings about Radames' ruin and death. There, too, she chooses freely to die with him.

The other strong woman I think about--Leonora--also chose freely. This woman is married to Florestan, a political opponent of a tyrannical leader and governor of a prison near Seville. Refusing to be corrupted by Pizarro, Florestan is seized by him and thrown into a dungeon. Leonora is the only one who suspects where he has been imprisoned and she dresses herself as a young man, assumes the name of Fidelio and obtains a post of assistant to the chief gaoler [jailer]. A further complication occurs when the gaoler's daughter, Marcelline, falls in love with the "young man." When Marcelline's father urges the union of Fidelio/Leonora with Marcelline, he expresses the philosophy that love is not the only essential to a happy marriage, and money is the sovereign cure for most of the evils of the world. Fidelio replies that to her thinking the true source of wedded happiness is the union of two hearts that are attuned to each other. She chooses that moment to extract from him a sign of his trust and asks to be permitted to share his work and go below to the subterranean cells of the prison. When she hears of one prisoner whom Pizarro has jailed who is gradually dying for lack of food and drink, whom she could scarcely be able to endure the sight of, Leonora suspects it is her husband, Florestan, whom she will soon see. She demands to go down insisting she has the strength and courage to look at him, that her

courage is equal to anyone's. Meanwhile Pizarro, wishing to hasten Florestan's death, plots against him, and Leonora, overhearing him, comes on stage in great agitation, and in one of the most famous arias, denounces the absent Pizarro. "Monstrous fiend...does the voice of humanity, the call of pity, no longer move your tiger's heart!"

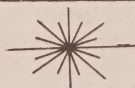
Leonora's strength and courage do aid her in her faith in her mission and, after a long scene of anguish and doubt, she accomplishes her deed. Down in the dungeon she at last sees Florestan and is present when Pizarro makes his entrance, dagger in hand, to demand Florestan's life. Leonora shrieks and runs forward, standing between the two men. Confronting Pizarro with her accusation she commands him, "Kill me first, his wife!" When Pizarro hurls her across the cell with the strength of a tiger, she returns again, this time drawing a pistol which she aims at him crying, "Another word and you are dead!" It has been said that the immediate subsequent scene has hardly a parallel for effect in the whole range of opera--the entry of the Minister who has come to inspect Pizarro's jail, and the unmasking of the crime. As the opera comes to a close, it is Florestan who falls into Leonora's arms, while the chorus bursts into song in praise of woman's constantly and Leonora's, in particular.

If you are thinking that this is still another heavy load to put on women, coming from the medieval tales of the "constant wife" urging her to be true and faithful in marriage, you are no doubt justified. But if you separate that theme from the actions of the character allotted to Leonora, you can add her to the roster of strong women.

Charlotte Brontë
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PIONEERING ... Cont.

This woman is also assertive in her thoughts about the future for women. She does her work in an office in the basement of her home. Now she is thinking in terms of cottage industries, using women to hang onto the homes they may be "awarded" through divorce or their spouse's death--rather than selling them because of fearing the cost of upkeep. "Keep that property. Keep it for women," she urges.

Being "dumped" by a husband, even though the marriage may not be all that satisfactory, could well be one of the most difficult moments of truth to live through. This is what happened to a presently separated 61-year-old woman when she was 53. "The first time I realized with a shock that I was an 'older woman,' and suddenly then felt old, was when my husband started an affair and became infatuated with a woman 17 years younger than I. She had been a close friend and I had rarely thought of our age difference until this happened ... the talk she and I had at the time still burns in my memory. It was full of barely concealed assumptions that I could no longer give my husband what he needed--despite the fact that we had an active sex life, that I played golf, skied, acted in community theatre, etc. To say I was boggled and bewildered by both her sexual aggressiveness and her put-down of putting me on the shelf, so to speak, kindly allotting me the house and my sons--after all, I still had these left--is an understatement.

"The jolt made me realize that the only significant difference between myself and this younger woman was age and the appearance of age. That keeping my mind alert was not enough. It was a bitter thing to face and I fought accepting it. I felt I had to 'prove' myself in some way," she continues, and this is where her assertiveness came to the rescue. "I bought a sailboat and learned to sail; I returned to college and got an advanced degree; I finally got a job."

In conclusion, we see again and again, that new paths of positive assertive action, embarking on new, constructive lifestyles are effective ways in which women can chart the second half of their lives, thus counter-acting the ageism that comes at us from all quarters. I'd like to add, in reference to the above illustration from our questionnaire that within our small and admittedly unrepresentative sample, respondents found younger women as much or more ageist toward older women as men.

OLDER WOMEN IN OREGON are exploring the idea of developing a community in the country and wish to be in contact with other women who also seek a change in life style. In addition, we are eager for information from older women living in the country in order to share ideas through publication of a newsletter. Write to Elana and Elizabeth, 3502 Coyote Creek Rd., Wolf Creek, Ore., 97497.

SELMA JAMES ... Cont.

SJ: But that is really a Wages for Housework slogan because it says what our relationship to society is and how it's money that keeps us with men.

MC: Our getting wages would cut down a lot on the welfare rolls, wouldn't it?

SJ: It certainly would. All the welfare women would be getting wages. And it would also end the division between those of us who are on welfare and those of us who are getting welfare from a husband.

MC: Do you feel that this is going to happen in the next 20 years, or will it take longer?

Read Selma James's answer in the third and final part of this interview in our next issue.



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